SLAVERY AND THE RISE OF THE ATLANTIC SYSTEM

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Introduction

BARBARA L. SOLOW

THE inclusion of the New World in the international economy ranks among the important events in modern history. Slavery was the foundation of that inclusion in its early chapters, and slavery accounts for the growth and importance of the transatlantic trade. The chapters in this volume thus place the study of slavery in the mainstream of international history.

Europeans brought 8 million black men and women out of Africa to the New World between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, and slavery transformed the Atlantic into a complex trading area uniting North and South America, Europe, and Africa through the movement of men and women, goods, and capital. It was slavery that made the empty lands of the western hemisphere valuable producers of commodities and valuable markets for Europe and North America: What moved in the Atlantic in these centuries was predominantly slaves, the output of slaves, the inputs to slave societies, and the goods and services purchased with the earnings on slave products. To give just one example, by the late seventeenth century, the New England merchant, the Madeiran vintner, the Barbadian planter, the English manufacturer, the English slave trader, and the African slave trader were joined in an intricate web of interdependent economic activity. Slavery thus affected not only the countries of the slaves' origins and destinations but, equally, those countries that invested in, supplied, or consumed the products of the slave economies.

In the centuries that followed the Era of the Discoveries, Europe turned its face overseas, the Atlantic supplanted the Mediterranean as the center of the international economy, and those nations with ties to the Atlantic forged ahead. In Asia, European powers found they could exploit their conquests by the expropriation of riches and resources, by the imposition of taxes and tolls, by the formation of monopolies, and by systems of forced deliveries. These policies, which were costly to maintain and involved serious disincentives and inefficiencies, were not readily applicable to the undeveloped lands of the western hemisphere. There were few existing rich economies to loot and an insufficient supply of voluntary labor to found new ones. The mining areas of colonial Spain aside, North and South America and the Caribbean languished before the coming of slavery, and trade between them and Europe stood at low levels. Once the productive labor of African slaves was added to the ample land and resources of the New World, economic growth began.

Brazil was founded on plantation slavery. The foreign trade of seventeenth-century New England, based on fur, fish, and timber, never achieved the pace of development that began when merchants started to trade with the slave plantations of the West Indies. To eliminate the economic stagnation of the American South, slaves were "the one needful thing" to grow rice, indigo, and Sea Island cotton and to expand tobacco production. Not one of the Caribbean islands succeeded in establishing a viable society on the basis of free labor; they flourished under slavery. The trade of Spain's Latin American colonies, which declined after the end of the mining era, only revived much later, with the introduction of large-scale slavery into Cuba. Those regions of the New World with few links to slavery remained relatively dormant.

On the other side of the Atlantic, those regions linked to the colonial trade experienced increased demand for their goods and services – manufactures and shipping – and became sources of dynamic growth in their countries. In a reciprocal relationship, European demand for colonial goods, matched by a supply of slave labor to produce those goods, encouraged European development in the colonial period. The chapters in this volume trace this relationship over time and space.

Barbara Solow's chapter argues that the link between slavery and colonial development is not accidental but arises from the inherent difficulties of settlement in regions where land is either originally abundant or has been made so by the expropriation of the indigenous population. Following arguments that go back to the English classical economists, Solow suggests that, at a time of simple agricultural technology, newly discovered countries with abundant land are more likely to stagnate than grow. High incomes are to be had, but only as a return to labor. The poorest Europeans will have an incentive to emigrate but may not have the means. If they do come and settle, they will find it hard to accumulate capital from their small farms and even harder to attract capital from abroad. Potential returns to the European investor will be great – greater than those at home – but they are unrealizable because a supply of labor will not be forthcoming to potential landlords. No one will willingly continue to share the fruits of his labor with a landlord by paying rent when he can capture them all for himself on his own farm.

Slavery solves the problem. Labor comes; the many have no choice but to obey the few; European capital and entrepreneurship can now combine with the labor of slaves and the abundance of land to produce goods for the metropolitan market; with the proceeds of these goods, the "empty" lands can now engage in international trade with that market, to their mutual benefit. Slavery is thus not merely a source of labor: Under the conditions stipulated, slavery is the only source of a permanent supply of labor and of increased capital accumulation. Thus there is nothing accidental about the appearance of coerced labor, whether of slaves, serfs, or convicts, in regions with vast tracts of thinly populated land. Where land was a free good and only labor received an economic return, Europeans garnered the return without performing the labor: by enslaving Africans (or enserfing peasants or importing convicts).

Solow cites Evsey Domar's modern model of this situation. Domar has expressed his conclusions in an especially illuminating way: Of the three elements of this simple agricultural economy, Free Land, Free Labor, and a Landowning Aristocracy, only two but not all three can coexist. Solow argues that this model of economic development with abundant land provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding colonial American history, neither deterministic, simplistic, nor unicausal, and more consistent with the historical record than alternative schemes. Unlike them, she says, it helps explain why two streams of labor, free and slave, came to the Americas and formed two different but interdependent forms of social and economic organization. And, unlike them, it gives slavery a major explanatory role in colonial history.

The passage of slavery from the Old World to the New is discussed by William D. Phillips, Jr. Europe knew slavery from antiquity, both in its small-scale, domestic, and artisanal form and as large-scale gang labor. The latter type, where slaves formed the basis of the labor system, had disappeared by the Middle Ages, and domestic and artisanal slavery followed. In any case, domestic slaves in part represented consumption, not production. Thus, American slavery in its characteristic form involved the reintroduction of a system dormant in Europe for 500 years.

The Spanish and Portuguese conquests in Latin America provided very limited opportunities for looting and legitimate trade. The absence (and destruction) of rich economies and trading networks meant that Europeans, in order to exploit their conquests, would have to devise a new economic and social order to produce profitable commodities for trade. To America's abundant land and resources, labor would have to be added. Spanish efforts to solve the labor problem by the *encomienda* and *repartimiento* systems were ended by royal decree (except in mining), and the demographic catastrophe suffered by the Amerindians ensured that an indigenous labor force would not be forthcoming. By the seventeenth century, labor in colonial Latin America was being supplied by free natives (*naborios*), mestizos, and mulattos; black slaves; and (illegally) coerced Amerindians.

For the first century and a half, Phillips writes, domestic and industrial slavery coexisted in Latin America, but after the middle of the seventeenth century the demand for slaves came almost exclusively from the plantation and mining sectors, and gang labor became the predominant form of slavery in Latin America.

Black slaves in significant numbers came to America embedded in an institution with very old roots: the sugar plantation. Its origins go back to the end of the eleventh century, when the first Crusaders found Muslims growing sugar on plantations in Syria and Palestine. When the last crusader states fell at the end of the thirteenth century, Europeans transplanted the industry to Cyprus, Crete, and Sicily in the Mediterranean and then to Madeira and the Canaries in the Atlantic. According to Phillips, the nearly exclusive reliance on slave labor came only in the Atlantic.

Phillips's chapter thus shows that, before Columbus discovered America, Europeans were growing sugar with mostly free and some slave labor in the Mediterranean; they were also using some slaves in domestic and artisanal occupations; they were acquiring slaves from black Africa and from other sources. But in the New World sugar was slave-grown, slaves were found mainly in gang labor on sugar plantations, and slaves were overwhelmingly black.

The transfer of the slave–sugar plantation to the New World arose because, in the absence of a developed, populous economy, Europeans needed to establish a profitable export crop and provide a labor force to grow it. This labor force would have to be coerced, and the Amerindians had neither the numbers, the skills, nor the discipline to form it. In sugar the Europeans found their profitable crop, in slaves they found the coerced labor force, and in Africa they found a trading network for acquiring the slaves.

"Without African slaves and the transatlantic slave trade," writes Franklin W. Knight, "the potential economic value of the Americas could never have been realized." Knight's chapter discusses the role of slavery in the developing international capitalist system that began in the era of European expansion.

Although slavery antedates capitalism, they were inextricably bound together. European expansion was not motivated exclusively by economic motives, nor did slavery initially have a role in it. Indeed, slavery had virtually ceased as a mode of production in Europe. But in the establishment of the new international capitalist system, Knight finds slavery an indispensable catalyst.

For Europeans, slaves were private property, and slavery fits into the capitalist world of profit-maximizing entrepreneurs who combine privately owned factors of production to produce goods for sale in a market. Besides being a commodity of trade, slaves are also a factor of production. Their introduction to the world economy added a significant amount of productive resources beyond what would have been offered voluntarily. Moreover, Knight points out that there are important backward and forward linkages in obtaining slaves, in combining them with other factors, in processing slave-grown commodities, and in shipping and marketing these products. Thus, Knight concludes, slavery played a role in increasing economic production, in spreading and remodeling capitalist institutions, in inculcating the capitalist mentality and traditions, and in developing and strengthening institutions appropriate to the capitalist world.

The notion that slavery was a noncapitalist or precapitalist institution has survived for a long time. Flavio Versiani, in a paper presented at the conference on "Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System" but not available for publication, observes that it underlies an interpretation that attributes the end of Brazilian slavery to the triumph of the capitalist spirit of the southern planters over the nonmarket, irrational economic ideology of the northern sugar planters. The technical and financial complexity of the slave economy argues against such a view, Versiani says, and the picture of a benign, paternalistic planter class is deceptive, since it is confined to a period when the economy had ceased to be very profitable. In Brazil, the early industrialists, who were organized in family firms and disbursed dividends by custom, not profitability, had a better claim to be called economically irrational or precapitalist.

Versiani sees the end of Brazilian slavery as the result of a politically based movement that fostered and even subsidized free labor immigration. The price of slaves had risen with the closing of the slave trade, and the price of free labor fell with the immigration of the 1880s. Against this background emancipation makes economic sense, and no recourse to economically irrational, noncapitalist slave owners is required to explain it.

Pieter Emmer makes a valuable distinction between the first and second Atlantic systems. The founders of the first system, Spain and Portugal, were at an early level of economic development, lacking the means for effective colonization. The Iberian system retained feudal elements; it was managed by an exclusivist commercial policy characterized by close state control. That policy was not conceived in terms of exploiting the colonies by producing for an international market. Instead it was designed to use the monopoly power of the state to organize the extraction of precious metals with the labor of the indigenous population, and colonial development was directed to sites and transit routes that furthered this policy.

Emmer's second Atlantic system began in the Caribbean in the middle of the seventeenth century and occurred in an open international setting, with the Dutch, French, and English as participants. Almost immediately the French and English moved to restrict Dutch access to their colonies and reserve them for their own nationals. The quick end of the open system did not represent a return to the first Atlantic system for several reasons: First, the northern European nations were at a different level of development than the Iberian system and could provide more of the elements of successful colonization; second, they exercised less detailed state control in their commercial policy; third, both legal and illegal breaches were made in their national policies. There was no exclusivity in capital movements, in the slave trade, or in commodity movements. For example, capital was raised in an international market; the British sold slaves to French and Spanish colonies; New England traded outside the British empire; French sugar was marketed by the Dutch.

From the beginning, Spain and Portugal differed in their circumstances. As Phillips notes, the Portuguese monarchy was more secure and less devoted to religious ends. Spain was more populous, and could expand the kingdom of Castile as a patrimonial state and establish settlements under semi-noble control. More important, Spain found precious metals in its territory much earlier than Portugal did. Spain had the mercury needed to exploit them. In order to hold Brazil, Portugal had to find sources of revenue other than gold and silver.

Portugal's solution was to plant an export-oriented agricultural economy in Brazil. It found the model flourishing in the Atlantic islands. Sugar was the export; African slaves were the laborers; and northern Europeans were the suppliers of capital, shipping, and markets in the absence of Iberian resources. The Dutch role, Emmer shows, was to penetrate the Iberian system and later transfer it to the Caribbean.

Spain's monopoly of sea power in the Caribbean was contested by the Dutch, French, and English, and from the early seventeenth century, Spain was unable to prevent northern Europeans from occupying the Lesser Antilles. After initial experiments with tobacco, indigo, and ginger, grown mainly by free labor, the islands were converted one by one to sugar plantations with slave labor. The colonies of both France and England were at first dependent on the Dutch, and Emmer shows that the Dutch continued to play a role in the nominally exclusivist but actually rather open second Atlantic system.

Emmer's chapter raises directly the question of what were the benefits of Atlantic trade and how were they distributed: Cui bono?

Africa has rarely been portrayed as a gainer, but how badly was it hurt? David Eltis presents some quantitative data useful for answering this question. In his chapter, he estimates first the value of the slave and commodity trade between West Africa (Senegambia to Angola) for five decades: 1680s, 1730s, 1780s, 1820s, and 1860s. African exports are measured c.i.f. and imports f.o.b. in current prices. Total trade increased until the decade of the 1780s; it fell to a lower level in the 1820s and rose to new heights in the 1860s. (However, the series is in current, not constant, prices.) Although the 1860s show trade high in absolute value, world trade had increased by so much more that Africa's share fell. Africa's role in world trade was important in the slave era, not afterward.

Slaves dominated Africa's Atlantic trade until the 1860s, accounting for 86%, 94%, and 81% of the total in the 1730s, 1780s, and 1820s, respectively, but less than 1% in the 1860s. To the 1730s the expansion of trade reflected a doubling of both prices and quantities; thereafter prices doubled but quantities increased only by half. Thus, the slave market was demand oriented, and supply was at first elastic but less so at higher quantities.

Examining the composition of per capital imports into West Africa, Eltis finds that textiles were dominant in every period. Potentially socially destabilizing goods (alcohol, guns, gunpowder) amounted to around 20–30% of the total. Eltis notes that the share in African imports of firearms, alcohol, and tobacco did not differ from that in many other countries and that gun imports in the eighteenth century were lower than in the nineteenth.

A comparison of Africa's total trade (exports plus imports in current prices divided by 2 divided by population) shows West Africa far below Brazil, the United States, Great Britain, and the British West Indies in every time period studied. Eltis concludes that this may indicate that European goods could make far fewer inroads into Africa than they could elsewhere: "African textiles, metal goods, and merchandise satisfying psychic wants were simply more competitive in the face of European competition than their counterparts in the Americas." It may, however, merely indicate low levels of income in Africa.

Finally, Eltis examines the value of trade (exports plus imports) between six West African regions and the Atlantic world. The wide geographic dispersion of African trade is well documented. Only the Bight of Biafra and Senegambia weathered the suppression of the slave trade without suffering decreased revenues, and the Bight had consistently the greatest trade contact with the Atlantic, probably from the 1740s. Eltis notes that in no region was the revenue per capita of oceangoing trade significant, though Dahomey has the best claim.

Eltis concludes that his analysis would be interpreted as tending to minimize the significance of the transatlantic slave trade to Africa. His findings have shown, Eltis remarks, that "more than most populations in the nineteenth century world, Africans were feeding, clothing, and sheltering themselves, as well as developing the full panoply of a multi-faceted cultural existence, without overseas economic exchange." May not the self-sufficiency of Africa and the failure of European goods to penetrate its markets show that any supposedly negative impact of the slave trade was illusory? he asks. Nevertheless, he concludes, contemporaries and modern historians will continue to believe that slavery did have a significant impact. Indeed, Eltis's chapter illustrates that wide differences of opinion existed at the conference on the validity and interpretation of his estimates. May not Africa's international position partly be a result of the slave trade?

If Africa was unaffected or adversely affected by slavery, how can we explain Portugal, a great slaving nation and imperial power, yet an increasingly backward economy from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries? This is the subject of Joseph C. Miller's chapter.

Miller shows that, from the beginning, metropolitan Portugal was involved only peripherally in developing its Atlantic possessions. Genoese provided capital for Madeira and São Tomê, and Brazilian trade with Europe was dominated first by the Dutch and then by the English. Local trade and plantations fell to colonial elites, Jews, and Afro-Portuguese in São Tomê, Luso-African settlers in Angola, and the American-based planters and merchants in Brazil. Internationally in Europe, from the middle of the seventeenth century, Portugal depended on England to guarantee its national sovereignty and, in turn, granted England access to its markets at home and in the colonies.

Metropolitan Portugal provided administrators for the imperial territories but thus abandoned economic activity there to others. Vain efforts were made to limit foreign and colonial access to the empire, particularly with regard to the rich trade in sugar and gold from Brazil. Angola occupied a distinctly secondary position on the scale of metropolitan development priorities. Miller concludes that to the limited extent that these protectionist policies succeeded, they managed only to protect backward and inefficient sectors of the Portuguese economy, and by the late eighteenth century Pombaline Lisbon had to all but acknowledge its inability to dominate commerce in Angola and Brazil.

If Brazil meant riches for England and brokerage for Portugal, Africa assumed the position of a second-best market, to be fought over by Brazilian colonials and metropolitan Portuguese who were losing out in the main lines of imperial economic development. The low-value rum that Brazil sent to Angola, like its famous trade in third-rate tobacco to West Africa, played a role analogous to the shipments of otherwise unprofitable products of colonial New England: This trade gave a colony an advantageous secondary staple.

In the final analysis, although slavery made Brazil a valuable producer of sugar, source of gold, and market for manufactures and other goods from Europe, the Portuguese empire was not the main beneficiary. Portugal made superficial gains from brokerage, but England sold manufactured goods at higher prices than the Brazilians could otherwise have afforded and received Portugal's tropical products and gold more cheaply than it could have done under other circumstances. England would not have done either on such a scale or made equivalent profits without the secondary, marginal trade in slaves from Angola.

European conquest of foreign lands does not guarantee political sovereignty, and political sovereignty does not guarantee successful economic exploitation. This is the starting point of Alencastro's chapter on the Portuguese empire. The metropole must "colonize the colonies" by consolidating political authority, by ensuring the existence of an economic surplus, and by directing the surplus toward itself. Slavery is the key to understanding how the Portuguese imperial structure managed these problems.

In their Asian dominions, Alencastro observes, the Portuguese neither organized nor invested in productive activity, but entered as participants into the age-old trading patterns of Asia. They tried, with minimal success, to divert the gains to their own account and eventually lost their position in Asia to the Dutch and, later, the English. In East Africa the Portuguese had even less success. In Mozambique they were swallowed up in the ongoing local commerce and became just one group among many in the East African trading system. They were, in Alencastro's word, "kaffirized." On the other side of Africa, Portugal's policy was the diversion of the domestic slave trade to international markets.

In the different Latin American context, without the flow of metalwares, textiles, and spices of the East, the Iberian states sought first to extend their sovereignty and then to control the natives to ensure an economic surplus for Europeans. At first, the metropolis tried to control the colonies through royal officials and the clergy; later, control was exercised by assigning each colony a role in the Atlantic trading system. Where Spain's policy rigidly focused on direct trade between the colonies and the home country, leaving the slave trade to subcontractors, Portugal introduced Africa into its empire from the first.

For Alencastro, slavery is the decisive element in understanding the political and economic structures of the Portuguese empire.

1. The introduction of African slaves solved the contention – dating to the Amerindian period – among crown, clergy, and colonists over control of the labor supply.
2. The slave trade was an important source of revenue for crown and church. Duties, fees, and taxes on slaves and their products provided a mechanism for financing these institutions at colonial expense.
3. By introducing African slaves to the international market, the Portuguese empire moved from what Alencastro calls a "circulation economy" to a "production economy." The extended coercion of Africans added a large labor input to the world economy, resulting in increased commodity production as African labor was joined to the rich, abundant land of Brazil. The British and French were quick to adopt this strategy for generating profit for their own empires.
4. The slave trade tied Portugal's possessions together in a complementary, not a competitive, pattern. Slavery linked the African to the Asian colonies: Lisbon had to remit precious metals to cover the deficit in its Asian balance of trade, and it acquired these metals in Africa by exchanging slaves for them. Brazil was linked to Portugal by exports and to Africa by imports.

Alencastro sees slavery as a consequence of imperial policy in the expanding capitalist world, not as a question of demographic, cultural, or somatic factors.

Thanks to the spectacular growth of Saint Domingue, after the Seven Years' War the French Antilles came to rival the British West

Indies in the output of slave plantation crops and to outdistance them in productivity. French foreign trade rose dramatically over the course of the eighteenth century, growing, according to one estimate, by at least 3% a year between 1717 and 1787. At different times, the share of total trade attributable to the colonies ranged from 34% (1717 and 1721) to over 40% (after 1770) for Bordeaux; around 33% (between 1773 and 1778) for Le Havre-Rouen; and between 15 and 20% (from 1730 through the 1770s) for Marseilles. This colonial trade was primarily to the plantation colonies; neither Canada nor Louisiana was so important, and in any case, both ceased to be French after 1763.[1]

Patrick Villiers presents a critical survey of French trade statistics, beginning with official series from the eighteenth century and continuing with the contemporary work of Jean Tarrade. Villiers supplements the usual sources with data on French fleets. These data have hitherto been of little value for estimating colonial trade in slaves because of ambiguities of tonnage measurement. Villiers has now resolved this problem; his work enables us to make fruitful use of the fleet data.

What effect did this growth in trade have on the French domestic economy? A full-scale assessment remains to be written, especially a comparison with the British case. In his book *La Rochelle and the Atlantic Economy during the Eighteenth Century*, John G. Clark provides many materials useful for considering the question. Professor Clark was unfortunately unable to present a paper at the conference; his work contains valuable hints.

The West Indian trade engaged the bulk of eighteenth-century shipping in the Atlantic ports of Nantes, La Rochelle, and Bordeaux. Even Marseilles, trading mainly with the Mediterranean, and Le Havre-Rouen, trading mainly with northern Europe, experienced added impetus from the colonial trade. Nantes and La Rochelle dominated seventeenth-century Atlantic trade; then La Rochelle's share began to decline and Bordeaux's to rise, while Nantes's share stayed fairly steady; by the 1770s and 1780s, Bordeaux had 25% of all French foreign trade, over 40% of it colonial. These ports were fully integrated into the Atlantic trading system, Clark points out, with links to Amsterdam, London, Geneva, the Hanse towns, Africa, the Indian Ocean, Canada, Louisiana, and the West Indies. Capital, goods, and information flowed increasingly back and forth. Yet the link of France's Atlantic economy to its domestic economy was not strong: France's

[1] John G. Clark, *La Rochelle and the Atlantic Economy during the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1981), p. 40.

advantages over Great Britain in the West Indies may well have been overborne by its disadvantages at home.

Clark describes this dynamic Atlantic economy as yoked to a dormant rural sector and an exploitative state:

> Three economies, each with its own special focus and at a different stage of development, coexisted in eighteenth-century France. A subsistence rural economy consisted largely of peasants, most of whom were so marginally integrated with regional markets that the nation was only imperfectly fed. . . . The second economy was based on the coastal and major river cities, connected by major waterways, which serviced each other's needs and the markets of the colonies and foreign nations. The primary economic hinterlands of the coastal cities lay overseas rather than inland. . . . The third economy – the state – fulfilled its own needs by milking the other parts of the triad. (P. 16.)

The hinterlands of the Atlantic ports consumed only small quantities of the imported goods and were poorly developed sources of exports. La Rochelle, the poorest, had the most meager industrial sector: Aside from sugar refineries, "only a small glass plant, three starch manufacturers, and an earthenware factory" (p. 256). Nantes could draw on the Paris basin, but trade was burdened by feudal tolls on the Loire. Bordeaux had a rich wine-producing interior and was connected by the Gironde to the wheat, lumber, wool, cheese, and coal of a wide area.

Thus, to a larger extent than Great Britain, France had to obtain trade goods from outside of its own economy – from Holland, the Hanse towns, and the Baltic. The Dutch provided cheese and cowries for the slave trade; Hamburg, Lubeck, and Bremen sent manufactures, metalwares, textiles, wood products, and food; the Baltic sent planks, staves, and barrels. The impetus that French colonial production gave the economy had to be widely shared with these northern countries.

The same is true of invisible earnings. Clark explains that although French ships dominated in the high-seas merchant fleet – the *vaisseaux de long cours,* trading to the Atlantic, Africa, and the East – foreigners dominated the European trade – *le grand cabotage,* trading to England and Ireland, Holland, Scandinavia, the Baltic, and the Mediterranean. Many Dutch merchants resided at Nantes, and in the early eighteenth century foreign vessels were preponderant at Bordeaux. Clark quotes a Rochellais analysis of *le grand cabotage* in 1783, attributing the Dutch superiority to their lower costs and greater experience in northern waters. The costs were explained by greater efficiency and by regulations that required the French to carry crews twice as large as the Dutch. In any case, the shipping earnings associated with the rise of the colonial trade were shared by the French with others (particularly with fellow Protestants in Amsterdam and Geneva). In a word, the multiplier effects of the expansion of France's plantation colonies were spread beyond France.

Clark stresses the economic burdens imposed by the ancien regime and, consequently, the difficulty of translating *any* economic impulse into sustained development. In his view, the French state not only failed to further the economic interests of the nation, it actually impeded them. The state competed for resources with the private sector and used these resources unproductively; it diminished capital availability; its tax policy, perversely, fell disproportionately on the peasantry and bourgeoisie; and "hardly a commodity moved but a fee was exacted against it" (p. 22). Under the ancien regime the incentives for economic gain were found less in enterprise and efficiency than in seeking privilege, subsidies, and monopoly.

Thus, because of the nature of the hinterland of its ports, of its rural economy, and of its state, France evidently benefited less than Great Britain from the dynamic growth of its plantation colonies. Instead of containing the gains from colonial trade within one integrated commercial system, the way the British empire did, the French situation diffused them over a wider area. French colonial growth encouraged metal and textile manufacturers in northern Europe and shippers, insurers, bankers, and other purveyors of commercial services there. The earnings of these northern Europeans on these goods and services could be spent anywhere, not just in France. In the British case, the circulation remained within one system, one that included the important North American colonies, for which the French colonial system had no corresponding member.

To a certain degree, the trade between France and its rich West Indian colonies represented a trade between northern Europe and those colonies: Colonial produce was in part reexported to northern Europe to pay for the trade goods that originated there. For this portion of its colonial trade, France was a bystander as the sugar and supplies flowed between the islands and the northern countries.

This is not to say that its colonial trade failed completely to stimulate French industrial development. Nantes drew on a wide area of suppliers. Charles Tilly has argued that increased manufacturing for colonial markets in the Vendee, by altering the balance of the rural economy, was part of the background of the counterrevolution there. Behind La Rochelle, textile production for the colonies was initiated in Niort, St. Jean d'Angely, and Saintes. Bordeaux had a more flourishing industrial base and hinterland than either. The dependence of